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THE WAR AND THE DILEMMA OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC

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I

One of the striking characteristics of the present time is its uncertainty as to the nature of ultimate religious loyalties. Science, higher criticism, the disconcerting effect of evolution upon authoritarianism, the rise of a secularized social conscience, the unfortunate alliance of Protestantism with the discredited pecuniary individualism of business, the sudden and radical transition from the provincial estate of a "nation of villagers" to a tense, highly mutualized, industrial civilization, dominated by the chaotic and irresponsible life of the city, and finally the cataclysm of a world-war—these are some of the things that have bewildered our spiritual leaders and made them lose their bearings. The conscience of the church, together with that of the community, is little more today than "a heterogeneous collection of provincial moralities."

This prevailing uncertainty as to the bearing of religion upon life appears in the feverish attempts that are being made to reconcile the ethic of Jesus with the Christian patriot's duty in the present world-war. There is, in spite of individual utterances of Jesus to the contrary, a very general conviction that the essential spirit and intent of his teachings are opposed to war. This general conviction has given rise to an uncomfortable dilemma, which we may state as follows. If we accept the spirit of Jesus' utterances as final, as orthodox Christianity has always professed to do, then the ethical sanctions for war that have been built up within historical Christianity are false and should be repudiated. On the other hand, if it be granted that institutionalized Christianity's moral sanctions for war are valid and meet the approval of the best men of every age, including the hosts of Christian men who are enlisting

in the present great crusade to make the world safe for democracy, then we must be honest with ourselves and say that the moral ideal cherished by Jesus and his immediate followers, an ideal in which, as we shall see, war had no place, cannot be considered binding upon the consciences of men under all conditions and in every age. We cannot consistently accept the deliverances of the consciences of Jesus, John, Origen, Tertullian, and Lactantius as to war while in actual reality we are ordering our lives in this matter of an appeal to force according to the ethical teachings of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and the great body of Christians of today.

It is not a question as to the patriotic Christian's duty under existing circumstances. The conscience of the great body of institutionalized Christianity is entirely clear as to its duty to obey the call to arms. Never was that call issued in a more righteous cause. It is not a question as to the attitude of historical Christianity toward war. The church from the days of Ambrose and Augustine has sought and found ethical sanction for the use of force. The problem is one of intellectual consistency or, if you please, of intellectual honesty. Stated in its broadest terms, the question is as to whether we can accept the moral sentiments of one age or group, even though it be the group that surrounded Jesus, as final for all succeeding ages in which new and unforeseen contingencies arise and where the moral sentiments of men are organized in terms of totally different social, political, and economic environments. Must we say that the attitude of Jesus toward war and all forms of brutality and violence was final only for himself and his immediate group, as giving expression to their interpretation of the ethical ideal, or must we claim with an authoritarian ethic that the deliverances of the moral consciousness of Jesus are final for all succeeding ages? This is the dilemma of the Christian ethic offered by the present international situation.

It is of course quite common for the apologist for the finality and authoritativeness of the Christian ethic to escape from the present dilemma by asserting that did Jesus live today and were he faced with the same problems that face the moral and spiritually minded men of this nation he would undoubtedly act as the Christian patriots are acting when they enlist for the purpose of killing their

fellow-men. Stated in this broad fashion, this purely hypothetical formulation of the problem appeals to the uncritical moral sense of the average man and seems to secure the sanction of Jesus' example for war. In reality this hypothetical statement involves vicious and unpardonable jugglings with the facts of psychology and of social evolution. In the first place the Jesus developed from childhood to maturity within the present social order would be an entirely different personality, with a different measure of moral values, from that of the historical Jesus whose moral sentiments were shaped by the simple, peace-loving village life of the Palestine of the first century. On the other hand, speculations as to what the moral reactions of the historical Jesus would be were he suddenly placed in the midst of this war-torn world can hardly give us a satisfactory solution of the problem.

II

The various attempts that have been made to avoid this dilemma reveal the chaos prevalent in contemporary religious thought. On the whole the Roman Catholic moralist has succeeded better than the orthodox Protestant in maintaining intellectual consistency, for the authoritarian ethic of the Catholic church is not confined to the ethical teachings of the Bible. Side by side with the utterances of Jesus stands the vast body of ethical traditions gradually accumulated in the effort to rationalize the developing moral experience of the church. This organized body of ethical traditions dealing with war was a slow growth.¹ Its earliest lineaments appear in Ambrose. These were further elaborated by Augustine. In the thirteenth century Aquinas embodied the theses of Augustine in the ethical portions of his great *summa*. The theologians of the sixteenth century, Vitoria and Suarez, gave final formulation to the Roman Catholic ethic of war. The sanity of this body of ethical tradition is evinced by the fact that Grotius, the formulator of the law of nations as to war, made large use of it in his work *de jure belli et pace*, published in 1625.²

¹ A. C. McGiffert, "Christianity and War: A Historical Sketch," *American Journal of Theology*, XIX, 323 ff.

² Mgr. Batifol, "The Catholic Church and War," *Constructive Quarterly*, III, 199.

Fundamental for the Catholic ethic of war is the contention, which differentiates it perhaps more than anything else from Protestantism, of an essential unity underlying all those values that have emerged and secured a more or less permanent place in Christian civilization. To be sure the gap between the world of absolute values represented by the Kingdom of God and the immediate social order, bequeathed by early Christian ethic, remained for centuries, though Ambrose and other patristic thinkers sought to bridge it by means of the social philosophy of the Stoa. The dualism appears in its most uncompromising form in Augustine's *City of God*. In the course of time, however, the lust of a secularized church for power, the rise of a feudal society in which class distinctions were based upon status, the growing emphasis of social values due to the development of trade, and the emergence of an intensive and self-conscious civilization made imperative the formulation of a social and ethical philosophy that would assure to the church the continued loyalty of men by showing that only in the church could all the values represented by different social activities find fitting recognition. The brain of the "angelic doctor" provided the alembic for the subtle process of distilling these values from the "spotted actuality" of society and building them into a permanent and thought-satisfying scheme.

Into the philosophical retort, from which finally emerged the finished product of Thomas Aquinas' great *summa*, many elements entered. Among them we find the *jus naturale* of the Stoics, the Decalogue and militant Old Testament ethics, the pacifism of the Sermon on the Mount, the mystical idealism of neo-Platonism now permanently institutionalized in the *vita contemplativa* of the monastery, the traditions of the Fathers, and last, but not least, the architectonic elements of the thought of Aristotle. The significant thing for the problem of war was that, by thus taking over the Aristotelian conception of an evolving moral order regulated by an ascending scale of forms or values, it became possible for Aquinas to ascribe to all the various activities of the different social groups a definite function and a unique moral dignity. To be sure he introduced the principle of relativity into the moral order, but without it he would hardly have been able to include the radical

pacifism of Jesus and the profession of arms in the same general ethical scheme. The church, in blessing the sword of the knight, recognized the moral value of the profession of arms; but by excluding the clergy from military service, as was done at the council of Chalcedon in 451, the church also recognized the higher ethic of nonresistance. This was not intended to be a condemnation of militarism, for the monk was permitted, nay enjoined, to pray for the success of the arms he was not allowed to wield. The rights and duties of knight and saint were measured in terms of their peculiar status and function in a comprehensive moral order.

It is of course entirely obvious that this artificial segmentation of ethics into a series of ends determined by status, while offering an apparent solution of the problem of war, destroyed the essential unity of the moral life and abridged the notion of individuality; for the moral unity of Aquinas' system had slight basis in the facts of life; it was merely the logical and metaphysical justification for the church's claim of complete control of the life of the mediaeval man. The contention that all the moral capacities of the individual could find full and adequate expression in the limited group life to which he was confined by the principle of status is psychologically and ethically false. The modern conception of the individual insists that the attainment of the moral ideal is only possible where each shares as far as possible in the larger life of the whole. The Catholic ethic of war has, however, always appealed to the moral common sense of Christianity. It seems to solve the problem by superinducing upon the social order an unreal and arbitrary scheme of values. But if we accept the early Christian ideal and seek to incorporate it in any real sense in the existing social order, it may be seriously doubted whether this can be done without adopting some such scheme of ethical relativism as we find in the philosophy of Aquinas. The appeal of the Catholic ethic of war is due to the fact that it is after all a moral compromise growing out of the practical exigencies of institutionalized Christianity. The Catholic Christian, therefore, who follows the ethical traditions of the Fathers as to war finds it much easier to answer the call to arms with a

clear conscience than the orthodox Protestant who accepts as supreme the authority of the pacifist ethic of Jesus.¹

III

Of all the solutions offered from the Protestant point of view, the Quaker's ethic of war, perhaps, has most in common with the attitude of Jesus. For the Quaker, war is a "hideous denial" of the Christian faith. Hodgkin, secretary of the London Friends Foreign Missionary Association, quotes with approval the suggestion of George Bernard Shaw, that the best course for the church to pursue would be "to close our professedly Christian churches the moment war is declared by us, and reopen them only on the signing of peace. . . . This would act as a powerful reminder that, though the glory of war is a famous and ancient glory, it is not the final glory of God."² The Quaker claims that Tertullian's famous dictum, "the Lord in disarming Peter unbelted every soldier" (*De Idol.* 19), describes the attitude of the masses of early Christians toward war.³

The classical expression of the Quaker's attitude toward war is found in the address delivered to Charles II in 1660:

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatever; this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move into it; and we certainly know and testify to the world that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdom of this world.⁴

¹ Wright, "A Sixteenth Century Theologian and the Present War," *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, July, 1917, pp. 397 ff.

² Hodgkin, "The Church and War," *Constructive Quarterly*, III, 215.

³ It is interesting to quote in this connection the language of a great scholar of militaristic Germany: "Es bedarf nicht weiterer Worte, um festzustellen, dass das Evangelium alle Gewalt ausschliesst und nichts Kriegerisches an sich hat oder auch nur dulden will. Wie zum Überfluss—aber es war nicht überflüssig—ist Matth. 26, 52 noch gesagt: 'Steck dein Schwert ein; denn wer zum Schwert greift, wird durchs Schwert umkommen,' und daran schliesst sich die Mitteilung, dass der Vater im Himmel sein Werk auf Erden nicht durch Legionen kriegerischer Engel ausführen wolle (s. auch Joh. 18, 36) (Adolf Harnack, *Militia Christi*, p. 2).

⁴ Quoted by Hodgkin, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

The foregoing language indicates by its constant repudiation of "outward" wars and "outward" weapons that we can only predicate moral character of spiritual struggles. Hence the Quaker insists that if we would rightly interpret the mind of Jesus we must eliminate the use of force from the sphere of the moral. "The kingdom of God is within you." The Quaker contends that to drop to the lower level of force is to stultify the essential spirit of him who said, "My kingdom is not of this world else would my soldiers fight." To take the sword does not further moral and spiritual values; it can only be used under conditions where those values are purposely violated and ignored. Institutionalized Christianity is committed, in name at least, to a struggle the terms of which are spiritual, while in point of fact she denies her lofty traditions. She appeals to God for help against her enemies and then repudiates the spiritual and moral order that is presupposed in such an appeal when she arms her members and sends them forth to battle. The proof of the truth of Jesus' attitude, for the Quaker, is found in the fact that by being true to it even unto death he won for the cause of righteousness and truth a victory that no earthly conqueror has ever been able to equal.

The Quaker finds the root of Jesus' opposition to war in his great doctrine of love. The Kingdom of God is to be a dispensation of love, and perfect love casts out war and strife and fear. The logic of the ethic of war when carried to its conclusion means the utter destruction of all those things which make life desirable, and finally the elimination of life itself. The logic of love is life and that evermore abundant. The sheer necessity for self-preservation and the continued existence of all those values which enter into civilization and the higher life of man makes it imperative that he should cultivate the ethic of love. War is a cruel and expensive luxury. It is only possible on a large scale where the problems of government, of economics, and of science have been mastered and where medical skill has so far conquered disease as to insure an abundant population, so that man can indulge in his ancient pastime of human butchery. War is a royal luxury, the sport of kings who have skillfully cajoled their loyal subjects into breeding and training *Kanonenfutter* wherewith to make a Roman holiday. And when war,

with its frightfulness, its wastefulness, its unspeakable folly, its cruelty and lust, has left society exhausted, bleeding from a thousand wounds, and poisoned by hate, its temples in ruins, its homes in ashes, its women the spoil of the ravisher, love takes up her eternal task of healing and of life and reconstructs the fair fabric of civilization.

The principle of love, so fundamental in the ethic of Jesus, can never be neglected in any sane and comprehensive philosophy of civilization. It matters little what dress we give it—psychological, sociological, biological, or theological—the principle itself is too fundamental, too thoroughly human, to be ignored.

The fundamental law that Christ enunciated, as true and necessary for man's well-being as the laws of physics and hygiene, is that there is an underlying kinship between man and man and that trust and co-operation between men lead to life more abundant, just as their opposites lead to death. He put it that we *ought* to love one another. Another way of stating it is that we *must* or we shall be punished for it, just as certainly and just as automatically as if we disobey the law of gravity. This principle may appear silly or unmanly or unfair; the point is that it is *true*. To forgive one's enemies may seem an unreasonable thing to do, but no one can call it impractical—it works, whilst its opposite does not.¹

IV

The pacifist ethic of the Quaker, however, has called out, especially in England, vigorous protests on the part of those passionately enamored of justice and indignant at the impotent cry, "Forgive, forgive, love, love."² This group, while recognizing the moral pre-eminence of Jesus, refuses to believe that he can reject force as an instrument for insuring justice. "His conduct and character are unhesitatingly founded upon perfect justice, wise, discriminating justice, and such an idea includes a background of force, even though patient explanation and gentle entreaty stand full in the foreground" (p. 489).

These writers start from the very real and terrible facts of the present struggle. They see solemn covenants treated as mere

¹ Bolton, "The Fulfilment of the Law," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXVII, 202, 203.

² Maynard, "The Love Which Is Not the Fulfilling of the Law," *Hibbert Journal*, XV, 479 ff.

"scraps of paper"; they see neutral countries devastated as with a very besom of destruction; they see the deepest instincts of men violated by brutes in human form. Filled with this passionate desire for justice they come to the ethic of Jesus, demanding something more than a sentimental and passivist ethic of love; they want a sanction for the use of force. In direct opposition to the Quaker's point of view these thinkers insist that the social and political order, with the rights and human values concerned, must take precedence over the impotent ethic of non-resistance of the pacifist. "The war is, thank Heaven, not one of religion but of ethics" (p. 487).

Religion and ethics are not only differentiated, but the latter is preferred as giving the most effective basis for action. It is even insisted that the ethic of love and forgiveness can only be exercised because brave hearts are willing to fight for the sterner ethic of justice. It is this sterner ethic of justice that makes possible the ethic of love by assuring to it a stable social order. The ethic of love, therefore, is something of a spiritual luxury made possible by the law and order achieved in the eternal *Kampf um das Recht*. This militant ethic agrees with the note struck by secular moralists from the days of Aristotle to the present, to wit, that simple justice is the most fundamental element in the entire moral order. The ethic of love and forgiveness may supplement the ethic of simple justice, but can never supplant it.

This group pours out its scorn, furthermore, upon the lack of finer ethical discrimination and the atmosphere of sentimentalism so often associated with the ethic of love and nonresistance. To love all alike, saint and sinner, enemy and friend, the stranger as well as those of your own household, is to introduce confusion into our scheme of moral values and to make of love an essentially immoral thing. Such an indiscriminating love can only be predicated of a fool or of a god.

There is, indeed, inherent in the nature and constitution of every powerful sentiment something that is incompatible with strict justice, for powerful systems of feeling are prejudiced and self-centered. They arbitrarily select their own objects; they create their own measures of values. What furthers the mother's

love for her child is good, what antagonizes it is bad. Curiously enough this essential partiality of strong sentiments, especially that of love, has been capitalized in Christian theology of the predestinarian type. The supreme charm of divine goodness is found in the fact that, following the promptings of his own love, God has selected some, though undeserving, for the enjoyment of eternal bliss, while neglecting others whose claims are quite as strong. This sovereign love scorns even-handed justice and transforms what would be a hideous injustice from the human standpoint into a token of transcendent goodness. This very inequity of the divine grace elicits in the hearts of the redeemed a gratitude and passionate devotion for the adequate expression of which the infinite lapses of eternity are all too short.

It is doubtless a fundamental distrust of our ability to base an ethical system or a sound social philosophy upon a sentiment or an emotional attitude, even though that sentiment be love, the noblest of all, that has evoked the criticisms of the Christian ethic of love by the sober students of morals. Hobhouse writes:

The conception of a brotherhood of love based on the negation of self is demonstrably inadequate to the problem of reorganizing society and intelligently directing human efforts. Even on the personal side it is deficient, for human progress depends on the growth and perfecting of faculty, and therefore requires that provision be made for a self-development which is not selfishness but builds up a better personality on a basis of self-repression. Equally on the social side the ideal of loving self-surrender is beautiful, but not always right. Utter self-sacrifice is magnificent, but it is not justice, and justice and reciprocity are even more essential elements in any commonwealth that can survive and include average humanity within it than the readiness to resign all for the sake of others—a willingness which can hardly be made a universal rule without bringing action to a standstill.¹

V

A word must be devoted in this connection to a group which for lack of a better name we may call militant ecclesiastics. They represent for the most part staunch churchmen who are more interested in demonstrating the patriotism and loyalty of the church at this crucial moment than in the critical interpretation

¹ *Morals in Evolution* (3d ed.), p. 524.

of the mind of Jesus. They are from the very nature of the situation then special pleaders. Hence it is not at all surprising that in their zeal to discover something in the records more warlike than the passivist mandates of an ethic of nonresistance they are led to read into the language of the gospels meanings which in many cases are more than doubtful. For example, a writer who selects for his theme "The Warlike Context of the Gospels" begins by asking, "What would Jesus teach if he were in our midst today?"¹ Throughout a dozen pages or more the evidence is piled up to show how the fighting instinct must have been encouraged in Jesus. From infancy he was familiar with the Old Testament, "a book of war"; naturally the warlike traditions of his family, the exploits of Gideon, Barak, David, and the rest, who "subdued kingdoms, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens," would be familiar to his ear from childhood; his most intimate associates were the pugnacious "sons of thunder"; he was born among the Galileans, whom Josephus describes as "men inured to war."

Thus is the way paved for the triumphant reply to the question raised at the start:

And this Christ did he stand forth out of the dim and distant past and appear in England today . . . would he not bid us call to mind the exhortation of Jehovah to another Jesus, on the borders of the promised land, "Have not I commanded thee?" Resolve on war: came it not from noblest motives? "Be strong therefore and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee" [Josh. 1:9].

Such language may have a certain apologetic and hortatory value; it is hardly satisfying to the serious student because it ignores many of the acts and utterances of Jesus.

Another writer finds that Jesus sanctions war in the parable of the Wolf and the Shepherd.

Aggressive war is one of the expressions of the wolf-spirit, at present dominant in man. The antithesis of the wolf-spirit is the shepherd-spirit, at present nascent, weak, but growing in man. Its ideal is freedom; freedom for all; freedom for life and spirit; freedom from the wolf; and it does not bar violence in combating the wolf.²

¹ Rev. Charles Hargrove, *Hibbert Journal*, XIV, 366 f.

² Rev. J. M. Wilson, canon of Worcester, "Christ's Sanction as Well as Condemnation of War," *Hibbert Journal*, XIII, 840.

Into the simple framework of Jesus' thought with its otherworldly tinge is then read all the accumulated wisdom of modern science as reconstructed by Darwinism.

I take it to mean that the wolf-spirit, which grasps power and dominance for itself, which runs through all history, tribal and national, which has been inherited by us from countless generations of prehistoric ancestors, shall gradually give way in human nature, as the shepherd-spirit—which desires abundant life for all, and will fight, if need be, for freedom, if freedom cannot be secured otherwise—grows in strength [p. 844].

One may sympathize with the immediate and pressing obligation of the spiritual leader to find moral sanctions for his hearers during a great crisis such as now faces the Christian world. It is unfortunate, however, that the performance of this task seems to be inseparable from a certain laxity of thought and a disregard for the intellectual consistency which demands in the interest of truth that we discriminate between the necessary limitations of Jesus' thought when this parable was spoken and the modern moral or scientific values which the preacher finds it necessary to read into the parable to make his message effective. It is doubtless entirely legitimate to make use of great classical religious utterances, such as the parables of Jesus, as symbols around which we can drape our own moral and spiritual enthusiasms and through which we can give effective expression to the human values which appear supreme in our lives at the present moment. But there must inevitably be confusion of thought where all these varying symbolic usages of Jesus' words and parables are identified with the actual emotions and ideas that accompanied these words in his own mind. It is of course entirely obvious that the thought of Jesus cannot be made to stand sponsor for the Quaker ethic of nonresistance as well as the militant ethic of the patriotic churchman.

VI

Perhaps the most numerous group of apologists for the Christian ethic is composed of those who take middle ground between the pacifist ethic of the Quaker and the militant groups we have just discussed. They insist, as a rule, upon the essential moral supremacy of the Christian ethic but frankly acknowledge its impracticability in the present militaristic stage of social evolution. "The

ethics of the Sermon on the Mount were promulgated for those who became, or were to become, citizens of a very real kingdom, but one not of this world."¹ There are, to be sure, real moral values in the kingdoms of earth as well as in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the two spheres are not the same; each has its own ethic. The ideal is to be attained when the ethic of the world with its fighting spirit is absorbed into the higher ethic of Jesus with its "resist not evil."

The responsibility for this rather awkward dualism between the sphere of the perfect ideal of Jesus' pacifist ethic and the militant ethic of actual society is sought, not in the inherent difficulties growing out of any attempt at a faithful reproduction of the original spirit and intent of the ethic of Jesus as to force, but in the weakness of human nature and the imperfections of society.

It is altogether beside the mark, then, to rave about the violation of the Christian ethic in modern warfare of nations, seeing that the ethic only applies where it is voluntarily accepted, and its judgment only where there has been light in which it might have been accepted. As a matter of fact, those nations, which are merely Christian by courtesy of speech, act naturally in fighting, just as the true servant of Christ in abstaining from fighting acts naturally also [p. 221].

Taking for granted the finality and the feasibility of the early Christian ethic as to war, a very cheap and easy way out of the difficulty is thus achieved by asserting that the apparent failure of the Christian ethic is due to the fact that it has never really been tried—"it is idle for us to talk about the Christian ethic until we seek to understand it by living it" (p. 224). Here the tacit but dubious assumption is made that it is not only psychologically possible but that it is the height of ethical wisdom to strive to reproduce, as far as possible, in exact detail the organizations of emotions and sentiments that found expression in Jesus' ethic of nonresistance. It is assumed that this ethic, beautiful and attractive as it has always been to the hearts of men, offers for all ages and types the sanest and the most valuable instrument for the socialization of those powerful instincts and impulses that form the "cosmic roots" of character, fundamental among which is the fighting instinct.

¹ Rev. P. Gavan Duffy, "War and the Christian Ethic," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXVII, 219.

There are many and interesting variations upon this general attitude, which insists that we have in the Christian ethic the best solution of the problem of war, while acknowledging that such a solution is impossible in human society as at present constituted. Donald W. Fisher, in a stimulating essay, which, however, is not free from the prevailing confusion of thought, insists that "whatever connection may exist between war and the Christian religion holds only with regard to the Christian religion of history. No connection is discoverable between the concrete phenomena of war and the ideal and absolute essence of the Christian religion,"¹ for "in its ideal aspect the Christian religion maintains an unqualified opposition to war. It condemns the human impulses and motives without which war would be impossible" (p. 94). Yet Fisher's conclusion is that the peace aimed at in the ideal of primitive Christianity "is the only peace which the world would find sufferable, the only peace in which the human spirit could escape extinction; and it is the only peace which the world would find lastingly possible" (p. 108). If, however, the Christian ideal condemns the "human impulses and motives" from which war springs, and if, as psychology indicates, these impulses and motives are ineradicable and necessary elements in human nature, being merely perverted in war, we may well ask how the attainment of the Christian ideal will ever be possible so long as human nature remains as it is.

The real interest of Fisher, however, seems to lie in another direction. He is concerned mainly to indicate the very real and intimate connection between war and institutionalized Christianity. In an imperfect, though it must be confessed the only real, world with which we are acquainted, war and Christianity have many common enemies, many related interests; never have they declared themselves to be fundamentally at enmity with each other. Their agreements exceed their differences.

War and historical Christianity agree in that they tend to disrupt materialistic and sensualistic tendencies. To be sure "the war spirit is not identical with the spirit of God; it is not entirely

¹ "War and the Christian Religion," *International Journal of Ethics*, XXVIII, 107.

spiritual," but the church at the level of "grace" and war at the level of "nature" are striving for the same ends (pp. 95, 99). War and historical Christianity also are akin in that they are both irrational. The pacifist is always a rationalist; the great anti-militarists, Buckle, Spencer, Bentham, Hume, Comte, Voltaire, Holbach, Diderot, Kant, were rationalists. But "in general where we find opinion which acknowledges in war any considerable element of worth we also find, not a materialist or rationalist philosophy, but a religious and essentially Christian philosophy" (p. 101). The rationalist lives an artificial life, remote from reality; war and historical Christianity are close to life, nay are parts of life and partake of its colossal stupidities, its spiritual triumphs, its heroic sacrifices, its depths of folly, its hates and hopes, its blood and tears.

This writer's conclusions are in many ways typical of a general attitude toward the Christian ethic among a large class of thinking people. We recognize here a half-hearted and academic homage paid to the purity and loftiness of the early Christian ideal of peace, accompanied by the conviction that it is impractical and undesired—"it may seriously be doubted if there exists in the world anywhere any very sincere or single-minded desire to see it realized" (p. 108). There is no suggestion as to the way in which we are to make the transition from this imperfect world in which war and institutionalized Christianity find so much in common to the ideal world of primitive Christian pacifism. On the other hand, we get a very decided impression that for Fisher the only real world is the immediate and tragic one of "blood and iron," in comparison with which the world of the Christian ideal is a pale and ghostly unreality. In fine we seem to have here a typical illustration of the growing tendency, even among those who cling in more or less sentimental fashion to the time-honored doctrine of the finality and feasibility of Christian pacifism, to seek the real solution of the problem in the reasoned deliverances of the consciousness of historical Christianity rather than in the moral attitudes peculiar to the early Christian group.

It will hardly be denied that there is a menace to the integrity and efficiency of the moral life in any such tacit acknowledg-

ment of a permanent dualism between the ideal and the actual. Nowhere are the disastrous effects upon the religious and moral life of such a dualism more in evidence than in modern Germany. Luthardt was true to the traditions of Lutheranism when he wrote:

The Gospel has nothing to do primarily with the temporal but is concerned with the eternal life. It does not deal with external arrangements and institutions which may come into conflict with earthly affairs but with the heart and its relations to God, with divine grace, the forgiveness of sins and the like, in short with the heavenly life. The characteristic trait of the kingdom of heaven is the rule of grace while that of the kingdom of earth and the earthly life is the rule of justice. They are different entirely in kind, do not occupy the same plane and belong to two different worlds.¹

To try to interpret the Christian ethic in a temporal sense would "upset entirely the earthly life" (p. 85).

These words, written by a distinguished Leipzig theologian, now some years dead, are a striking commentary upon the land that has given birth to Prussian militarism. They enable us to understand why Germany, the very cradle of Protestantism itself, the land of Luther and Schleiermacher, could assume the rôle of the Frankenstein among the nations and foist upon the world the most hideous moral monstrosity of all time. The burning questions of German Protestantism have never been moral and social but theological and scientific. The implications of religious liberalism never affected political and economic conditions in Germany as they did in lands influenced by Calvinism. Luther's theological ideas shaped themselves so that the democratic implications of the spirit of Jesus, Paul, Wyclif, and Huss did not molest the privileged status of the landed aristocracy. Hence for generations the tramp of the human *Kanonenfutter* and the raucous cry of the Prussian drill-sergeant have never disturbed the pastor in his study or distracted the attention of the theological pedant intent upon the mysteries of the messianic consciousness of Jesus, the documents of the Pentateuch, or the influence of Gnosticism upon Christian theology. Today Germany and a bleeding world are made to pay a fearful penalty for the moral impotence of German Protestantism.

¹ Luthardt, *Luther's Ethik*, p. 81.

The world which Luther thought to have emancipated from the priest with his crucifix has been crucified upon the iron cross of Prussia.

VII

During these days that try men's souls it is natural, in the harrowing struggle for the conservation of those things that make life worth while, for some to find consolation in the belief in an eternal and indefectible world of values. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the central ideas of Calvinism, the theology of an "agonized conscience,"¹ should again appeal to the hearts of men. Furthermore, when the passions of men are running high, and the finer moral sensibilities are blunted, it is easy to fall back upon the cruder ethical ideas of other days, such as human depravity, the blood atonement, and the idea of an absolutely sovereign God who has impounded the moral values in the universe and deals in an arbitrary and vindictive fashion with the evildoer. All these ideas are to be found in more or less modified form in the most ambitious apology for the Christian ethic that has yet appeared.²

The central idea around which the two hundred pages of Forsyth's earnest and at times eloquent book are centered is the doctrine of the atonement:

I am bound to admit that all I have just been saying falls to the ground as a piece of speculative fantasy except on one condition. It all goes down at a breath unless it is founded on a rock. And that rock is the historic Cross as a real atonement, a real bearing of God's judgment on sin. Apart from that Christianity abjures moral history and sinks into the sand as a benevolent and ineffectual pacifism [p. 57].

This statement is exceedingly significant. It acknowledges that any interpretation of the Christian ethic based directly upon the simple teachings of the gospels is utterly incompatible with war and all forms of force. These teachings must be evaluated in the light of the eternal cosmic moral significance of the cross. "What one misses in certain lovable types of religion is the historic sense, and an ethic upon that scale, ethic in the grand style . . . the sense of cosmic righteousness and a historic continuity of public

¹ Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, p. 189.

² P. T. Forsyth, *The Christian Ethic of War* (London, 1916).

regeneration, with duty accordingly" (p. 92). The Sermon on the Mount

is but a series of illustrations of the power and principle of the Cross occasioned by certain circumstances. To substitute the teachings of Jesus for his Cross as the ethical source instead of using it as illustration is a very wide and anti-evangelical error. It displaces our center of gravity, and therefore causes Christianity to falter where it should firmly tread [p. 86].

It is of course obvious that the logically consistent but thoroughly unreal world in which the writer's thought moves prevents him from perceiving that he has done violence to the facts of the life and person of the historical Jesus. He has subordinated the simple idealistic ethic of the Kingdom to the later psychological reactions to the life and person of Jesus registered in the writings of Paul. The Pauline dramatization of the tragic death of Jesus was in the interest of a propaganda that would make the new religion attractive to a pagan world familiar with oriental and Greek passional cults of the type of Osiris and Dionysus. The exigencies of the Pauline missionary evangel had much to do with the subordination of the eternal beauty and simplicity of the story of the Prodigal Son and the Sermon on the Mount to the ethical monstrosity of the blood atonement.¹

In the cross, however, as the militant assault upon the forces of evil in the universe, Forsyth finds justification for the use of force. The soldier's quarrel now ceases to be an individual matter. It is part and parcel of the eternal moral process. The present war is no "mere matter of a local conflict of quarrelling nations, but of an Armageddon in the Lord's controversy with the world." The Christian soldier is the chosen instrument of a just and angry God; the soldier's high duty is to maintain truth and justice and holiness on the earth. "We are now more than soldiers. We are the international police. We are there neither for conquest, nor merely for self-defense, but for the world-order, liberty, justice and humanity for which Christ died" (p. 144).

Into this stern and inexorable ethical scheme Forsyth even seeks to fit the Golden Rule. The saint goes into battle with one desire uppermost, namely, to further this supreme world of moral values.

¹ Bacon, *Christianity Old and New*, pp. 75 f., 120 f.

If he is mistaken in his efforts, he asks that in the interest of those values he be eliminated. He is so passionately enamored of the eternal righteousness of God's will that he subordinates all other issues, all other loves and loyalties, to the furthering of this one great end.

If such a man is to do to others as he would that others do to him, is he wrong by Christian ethic, when he perceives a deadly sin in his fallen brother, in treating him as he desires to be treated himself, and at least risking(?) his brother's life in the process of averting his sin and its effects? [Pp. 14, 15.]

In this wise, according to Forsyth, we have the rather paradoxical situation in which it is possible to kill the Germans out of love for the Germans!

The pragmatic value of Forsyth's justification of war will hardly be denied. It fired the Christian soldiers of Constantine in the struggle against a decadent paganism; it animated the Crusaders in their repeated efforts to rescue the Holy City from the rule of the infidel; to it the pious Ferdinand made effective appeal in driving the Moors from Spain; it provided the sanctions for Alva's fearful treatment of the Netherlands just as it inspired the sturdy "Beggars of the Sea" to defy him and his legions; Cromwell and his Ironsides voiced similar sentiments in their battle hymns; it is still recognizable in the guise of the crude and half-pagan gospel of German *Kultur*.

But Forsyth's philosophy of war will hardly satisfy the modern thinker either from the standpoint of theology or of ethics. The statement of his argument in theological form does not add to its value; it might have been presented even more forcibly in purely philosophical terms. In fact we have a similar ethic of war in current German philosophy stripped of all theological trappings. We cannot escape the feeling that Forsyth has made illegitimate use of the authoritarian atmosphere always associated in the mind of the average man with the doctrines of traditional theology in order to secure a more ready acceptance of his ethic of war. The liberal theologian is apt to repudiate the argument together with its outworn theological dress.

It may very well be objected that Forsyth has not indicated in any clear and satisfying fashion the points of contact between

this indefectible moral order of the cross and the lurid and murderous atmosphere of the battlefields of Europe. By what marvelous insight into the nature of things can the American, French, or English soldier be assured that he is a scourge of an angry God wherewith to cudgel the wicked and recalcitrant German and the unspeakable Turk into a frame of mind more in accord with this eternal and indefectible moral order? Exactly the same philosophy has enabled both German and Turk to provide ethical sanctions for conduct that outrages humanity. There is not the slightest doubt that thousands of patriotic and intelligent Germans believe that, under God, they are the chosen instruments for the consummation of a divine plan looking toward the material, moral, and spiritual betterment of the entire world.

The outcome of the present colossal appeal to force, whatever it may chance to be, will hardly enable us to pronounce final judgment as to the relative merits of the civilizations concerned. Poison gas and machine guns throw no light for us upon the correctness of the ethical sanctions that inspire the conduct of the contestants. The only thing that the present immediate struggle can decide finally for us is the purely material and physical question as to which of the two groups of contestants is able to utilize most skilfully and effectively the material forces at their command for killing men. So far as human intelligence goes we have not the slightest indication that the flight of a German bullet or the explosive power of an English shell are affected by the eternal moral issues involved. The only possible merit the cause of the Allies can claim, as contrasted with that of the Germans, is that they are fighting for a return to conditions of civilized society which in their judgment will make for the richest and most successful cultivation of human values, while the Germans are fighting for the maintenance of a social order in which they can ignore these values whenever it suits their selfish national interests.

Finally Forsyth does not perceive apparently the somewhat dubious rôle God is forced to play in his philosophy. God, we are told, is vitally interested in the outcome of the present titanic struggle. He directs in masterful fashion every factor in the drama, physical as well as moral. Yet the shot and shell that fly daily

from trench to trench follow exactly the same physical laws in the case of each contestant. The aim of the Turk is just as deadly as that of the Englishman. The shell of the German gunner finds its mark just as unerringly as that of the Frenchman. If God directs this eternal moral order, if he manipulates every toothache, "every headache after a debauch" (p. 73), as a means of moral discipline, why does he not influence the laws of nature so that the bullets of his servants may fly true and those of his enemies may fly false? Or must we say that God has ordained the unchangeable laws of the struggle, "the rules of the game," and then leaves it to the contestants as to which shall be most skilful and intelligent in conforming to those laws? If this be true, wherein lies the moral worth of God's character and the reality of that indefectible moral order over which he presides? Is the goodness of God to be identified with the pitiless and inexorable laws of nature seen in the storm that drives one ship on the rocks and another safely into harbor? If so, God's goodness is little more than the unmoral, impersonal, inexorable uniformity of the mechanical order of nature.

Such a conception of the deity hardly satisfies the demands of the unsophisticated moral sense. It makes God remote, impersonal, immaculately aloof, unpardonably neutral where the fundamental issues of his Kingdom are at stake. To preserve his moral worth, even his very existence, he must become implicated in some very real fashion in the present struggle. We are forced to assert that his attitude toward the issues involved must be in some measure at least similar to our own. Contingency, the unforeseen and uncontrollable factors always present where we have the spontaneous activity of moral wills, must be as real to him as to us or else his interest in the final outcome will be nominal, artificial, cruelly and sardonically remote. A God who can keep the loyalties or even the passing interest of thinking men and women during these troublous days must feel with us the trembling of the moral balance of the universe, must agonize with us, bleed and die with us, or else hope to have no part in the paean of victory.

VIII

The foregoing discussion indicates great contrariety of opinion as to the bearing of the ethic of Jesus upon the problem of war.

To anyone at all interested in intellectual consistency this condition must appear intolerable. It is of course perfectly obvious that we cannot make Jesus responsible for the pacifist ethic of the Quaker as well as the militant ethic of the churchman, for the traditional and legalistic ethic of the Roman Catholic as well as for the evolutionary ethic of the progressive who sees in war but an evil made necessary by imperfect social development, for the hard-headed protagonist of social justice who subordinates love to righteousness as well as for the predestinarian ethic of the theologian who interprets the Sermon on the Mount in terms of the metaphysical implications of the cross. To attribute to Jesus all these various interpretations of the Christian ethic would be to convict him of a welter of contradictions only to be found in the brain of a madman. Apparently there is no phase of modern religious thought in which there is a larger need for plain, straightforward thinking than in the field of Christian ethics.

It would certainly seem that any trustworthy solution of the problem of war and the Christian ethic must be based upon some understanding of the way in which moral ideas take shape and are modified from age to age. It has already been suggested that the general type of ethical ideals of an age is the result of the organizations of emotions and sentiments by social, economic, and political forces. The need of the group or social order for self-preservation and social equilibrium tends to place a premium upon certain types of personality, certain attitudes of mind, certain virtues. Lecky has called attention to the fact that each period in the evolution of morals tends to accentuate some fundamental virtue that provides the measure of values for the other virtues.¹ One needs only to recall the emphasis of wisdom by the Greeks, courage by the Romans, love by the early Christians, poverty and chastity by the man of the Middle Ages, thrift and fidelity to obligations after the rise of a commercial civilization. It follows, therefore, that, owing to the constant shifting of the stresses and strains of the social order and the creation of new moral values, no community or group or age can ever hope to exhaust the whole of the moral experience. For the same reason it is psychologically impossible for any one type of character, no matter how universal its traits, to anticipate all

¹ Lecky, *History of European Morals*, I, 163.

future modifications of moral values. A character may be perfect and even absolute in the sense that it is the complete expression of its group or age, but fixed and final moral perfection is from the very nature of the evolving social process unthinkable. There is no place for such a term in an ethic that accepts whole-heartedly the principle of evolution.

What then, we ask, was the peculiar type of character emphasized by the age of Jesus? The general tendency of the period in which Jesus lived was to throw men back upon themselves and their inner attitudes for orientation in the realm of moral and spiritual loyalties.¹ The Roman conquest tended to minimize ancient loyalties and to set men free from the "cake of custom." Emotional needs once satisfied through local cults and religious symbols were thus set adrift. Men became emotionally self-conscious to a painful degree; hence the emergence of the religious problem in philosophy as well as in other phases of life. For religion deals with the problem of defining and conserving ultimate values.

In so far as men succeeded in reorganizing their religious loyalties it was from the subjective point of view. Moral obligations became for the most part matters of inner attitudes, problems of the subjective formulation of feelings and emotions. Not external acts or ritualistic performances but the "pure heart" was the measure of values. The choicest product of ethical inwardness among the Greeks was Stoicism. For the Stoic moral values were in the last analysis psychological facts. The moral drama began and ended in the soul. Spontaneity of will was interpreted to mean moral sovereignty. Virtue was a matter of inner attitude, a quality of the heart.

The ethic of Jesus marks the culmination of a similar movement making for ethical inwardness among the Jews. The movement, to be sure, began with the prophets, was intensified by the captivity and the Diaspora, and reached spiritual maturity during the enlightenment period of late Judaism. The thesis of the utilitarian

¹ Max Wundt, *Geschichte der griechischen Ethik*, II, 265 ff.; I. King, "Influence of the Form of Social Change upon the Emotional Life of a People," *American Journal of Sociology*, IX, 124 ff.; A. O. Lovejoy, "The Origins of Ethical Inwardness in Jewish Thought," *American Journal of Theology*, XI, 228 ff.

and hedonistic ethic of the wisdom literature was that the good man who obeys the divine law and observes the traditions of the Fathers should receive richer returns of this world's goods than the evildoer. The discrepancies between this thesis and the facts of experience gave rise to the problem of Job, the problem, not of the origin and nature of evil, but of its relative distribution. In order to explain and justify the sufferings of the saint, the Hebrew moralist was forced to fall back upon the notion that his experiences were a form of discipline designed to reveal inner weaknesses and to purge the soul of "secret sins."

This habit of introspective analysis gave rise to a sharpened sense of moral values. The Kingdom of God, an inner subjective attitude, took precedence over everything else; it provided the ultimate measure of values. The unpardonable sin was pride, "the last infirmity of noble minds," because it militated against the cultivation of this world of inner attitudes; hence the constant emphasis of those virtues most opposed to pride and self-assertion, namely, meekness, humility, forbearance, compassion, and self-sacrificing love. Since the moral initiative is taken out of the hands of the saint he must be absolutely open and receptive to the will of God, the holy and righteous Ruler of the universe.

This accentuation of the essentially inward nature of the moral situation manifested itself in striking fashion in two ways. It tended to give to the emotions and the subjective attitudes a moral dignity and worth without a parallel in the history of ethics. The dictum of the wisdom ethic, "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life," was in thorough harmony with the few suggestions of Jesus as to a methodology for the moral life. In the second place this emphasis of inner attitudes resulted inevitably in discrediting the significance of social institutions for the moral life. The eschatological setting in which the thought of Jesus, together with that of his contemporaries, moved to a very large extent was a sort of transcendental substitute for the immediate social order in which men had lost their faith. It provided a sublimated *mise en scène* for the unfolding of moral values which were felt to be incompatible with the persistence and enduring worth of existing social institutions.

It will be seen that this background of ethical traditions, presupposed in the teachings of Jesus, did not lend itself to a moral evaluation of war. All use of force was contrary to the spirit of Jesus, and that for two reasons. In the first place the entire atmosphere of the thought of Jesus was subjective, spiritual, ideal. In such a world force had no part or lot. It was impossible to ascribe to it moral value; there was no provision for its use. The prerequisite of every moral act was love, the expression of the essence of God whose will was the law of the Kingdom. Where love has been completely banished by the brutal and murderous spirit of the will-to-power the conditions necessary to the existence of moral values are lacking. In so far as the principle of coercion appears in late Jewish ethics, it is formulated in terms of a transcendental ethic that had few or no points of contact with the immediate social situation. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

In the second place it is difficult to see how Jesus could have associated moral worth with the calling of the soldier in view of his attitude toward social institutions. For Jesus was interested in the immediate facts of the moral life and not in the more or less remote social, political, or economic conditions that make possible the realization of moral excellence. But the soldier's calling is only moral in the sense that it utilizes force to assure to men the permanence and security of these social and material conditions. The present fight to make the world safe for democracy is an appeal to force to secure for present and future generations political institutions that will encourage the rich and free and full unfolding of human values. We have no evidence that Jesus was interested in reforming and perpetuating existing social institutions so as to secure for the ages to come the most congenial earthly setting for the attainment of the ideal. The famous dictum, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's," was little more than the recognition of the necessity of some sort of a *modus vivendi* if men were to live in the existing political order at all. It can hardly be twisted into an authoritative sanctioning of the permanence and moral value of the Roman Empire. Loisy is doubtless correct when he says:

The respect of Jesus for the political authorities was purely negative. In his reply to the question as to the tribute he did not intend to sanction the rule of Caesar as a principle of the future. It was not possible for Caesar to belong to the providential order. . . . His power would fail like that of Satan; Caesar was in fact in certain respects the representative of the order of Satan."¹

With such a mental attitude it would be impossible for Jesus to attribute moral worth to the profession of arms.

Those who seek in the ethic of Jesus a justification for war, therefore, are wasting their time and energies. Furthermore, they do gross injustice to that ethic itself. No artist would attempt to rival the matchless frieze of Phidias that still in part adorns the ruined Parthenon; to try to do so would result in a grotesque parody. No architect, however great his cunning, can ever hope to reproduce the spiritual *élan* of the spires of Chartres, the mysterious and colorful perspectives of the interior of Notre Dame, the glorious flamboyant façade of Rheims, now, alas! shattered by German shells. These artistic masterpieces are unique and inimitable because they sprang directly from the thought and aspiration of an age. But the Athens of Pericles and Phidias, with its brilliant and varicolored lights, is gone forever; the unquestioning faith of the twelfth century, which enabled men to carve their whole philosophy of life in the living stone of their cathedrals, is dead. Likewise, the peculiar stresses and strains of the social order, which wrung from the early Christian group their noble ethic of non-resistance, have disappeared with the flight of the centuries. The social order which is the prerequisite of the absolute finality of that ethical ideal is gone.

Yet that ideal lives on, like the frieze of Phidias or the Gothic cathedral, "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." To be sure, we realize that this unique moral experience can never be duplicated in all its details, for this very uniqueness has lent to the teachings of Jesus an indefectible character. At the same time these moral experiences will ever remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration to the late-born sons of men. We can never forget that in the person and spirit of Jesus we have the most unequivocal condemnation of the folly and wickedness of war the world has ever

¹ *Les évangiles synoptiques*, I, 231.

known. His ethic will always enable us to keep alive the hope, now faint and dim, but never entirely absent from the hearts of the best spirits of the race, that men may one day in very truth beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks.

Jesus' right to be called the world's Great Pacifist is not invalidated by the fact that he shared in the belief of his age that an era of perpetual peace could only be attained through a cataclysmic close of the present world-order and the supernatural initiation of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwell only men of good-will. He will still remain our Prince of Peace, although he failed to catch a true glimpse of the slow and infinitely laborious process through which man must in time tame the ape and tiger and achieve a social order in which the fighting instinct is not eliminated but harnessed and made to serve the cause of justice, sweetness, and light. The great canvas of human destiny must be ample enough for all possible heavens and hells of experience—men are today passing through an inferno undreamed of by Michelangelo. Among the high lights of the world-scheme the ethic of Jesus will ever occupy a prominent place. But it has reality only as part of a process the end of which is not yet. It is but one act in a drama upon which the curtain has not yet descended for the last time. May it not be true that the difficulties we experience in trying to apply the priceless treasures of the Christian ethic to the problems of modern life would be to a very large extent removed by a frank acknowledgment that this ethic has its necessary limitations?